

# The Religious Condemned with the Heathen

Sermon 5 in the Romans Series

## Romans 2:17-29

Our passage today is bookended by 2:16 and 2:29.

### I. The Religious Moralist 2:17-20

This “Jew” Paul speaks of is one who thought he was right with God, simply because he was a Jew. He would have had no problem with Paul says here. 17-20

Paul knows this theoretical man – and knows how he thinks – because Paul was that man but he lost all boasting in himself once he came to Christ.

“The Jew bore the name Jew proudly for it was the theocratic title of honor which marked him out as a member of the chosen race. He rested upon the law, confident that his salvation was assured by the mere possession of it. Worst of all, in boasting that his nation was the sole recipient of the divine favor he transferred to himself the glory that belonged to God alone.” Geoffrey Wilson

**Jeremiah 9:23-24** -- <sup>3</sup> Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise **man boast in his wisdom**, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, <sup>24</sup> but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight,

I know God’s will.  
I understand the law.  
I am confident that I can be a teacher.  
I am “a light to those who are in darkness..”

### II. Five Rhetorical Questions 2:21-23

Teach – and not do? -- utter hypocrisy

Steal? – even the smallest thing

Adultery? – true immorality and also a matter of the heart

Rob temples? – Chrysostom may have gotten it right, “It was strictly forbidden for the Jews to touch any of the treasures deposited in heathen temples because they would be defiled.

But Paul claims here that the tyranny of greed has persuaded them to disregard the law at this point.”

Boast in the law God yet dishonor God by breaking the law?

### III. Blaspheming God 2:24

We need to ask – how did they blaspheme God?  
They became a stench even to the Gentiles. Ezekiel .16:27ff

God compares Israel to a shameless harlot – whose brazenness astounds and embarrasses even the Gentile heathen nations.

It is primarily Spiritual Adultery – which then manifests itself in all sorts of actual heinous sins.

1. Only Israel knew the true and living God.
2. They blasphemed the Lord by allowing the heathen to equate their demonic gods with the only living and True God.

The Jewish Temple

By the time of Christ, the Temple had been cleansed and renovated from the desecration of pig's blood being offered in it by Antiochus Epiphanies 167 BC.

But God only allows wickedness to go so far.

Eventually Rome became the instrument for building the Temple into a magnificent building, a glorious Temple for the Messiah to come to – but a Temple that was not to be compared to the glorious True Temple – the body of Jesus.

What Rome gave – Rome took away in 70AD.  
And all of this was ordained and prophesied by God.

### IV. True Circumcision 2:25-29

Circumcision was important for the Jewish identity.  
But – they were missing the point of what circumcision was to show.

**Deut. 30:6** -- <sup>6</sup> And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

**Jeremiah 4:4** -- Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench *it*, Because of the evil of your doings.”

**Philippians 3:3** – (Paul writing to a primarily Gentile audience) -- For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

Applications: